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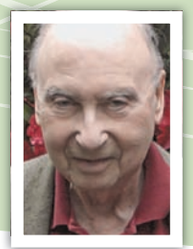

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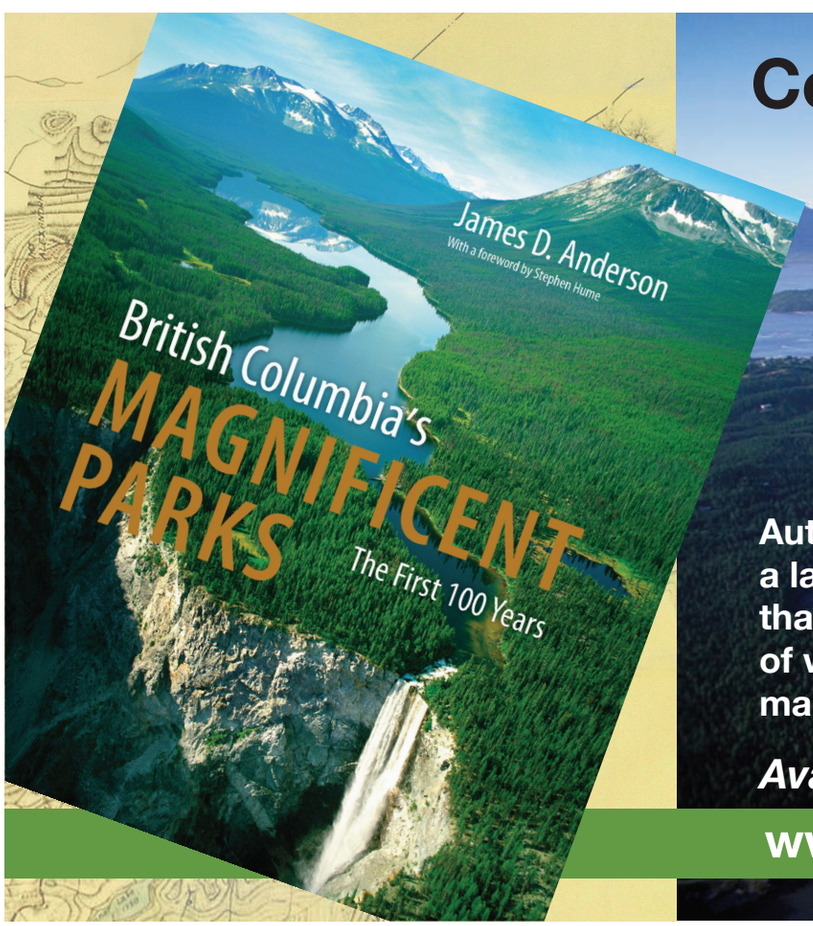


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Canada's biggest tree, the Cheewhat Giant, has a trunk diameter of over six metres (20 feet), a height of 56 metres (182 feet) and contains 450 regular telephone poles' worth of wood. (See article on page 21.) Photo by TJ Watt.

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# Syndrome X & Big Pharma

Sometimes, you see someone and you can't help think, "Now there goes a walking time bomb." The person is overweight and wheezing, his doctor probably calls him a "borderline diabetic" and he's likely taking prescription drugs for blood pressure and high cholesterol.

These people, along with my friend Richard who fits this description almost perfectly, have disease written all over them, in letters large enough for anyone to read. You don't have to go to medical school to see that people like Richard are probably at higher risk for a heart attack or stroke and exercise and a better diet should be the first prescription on their road back to better health. But our medical culture seems dissatisfied treating that which is obvious and instead goes for the not so obvious: a complicated set of criteria, a medicalized label and even more rigorous screening for disease.

This is the phenomenon in play around a relatively new condition said to affect a third of the population. Statistics supplied by the US National Health Statistics for 2009 said that approximately 34 percent of adults in the US meet the criteria for "metabolic syndrome" which is a cluster of above-normal measurements of blood sugar, blood pressure, cholesterol and Body Mass Index (BMI). Having this particular cluster of bad things wrong with you, a phenomenon also known as Syndrome X, means you might be a candidate for a heart attack or stroke.

My question is are people like Richard, who could be the poster child for Syndrome X, any better off now that they have a new label?

That's hard to say, but one thing is for sure: getting the label involves lots and lots more screening and that screening typically ends in more drugs. Medical screening is all about doing something to discover diseases in healthy people before those diseases can go on to hurt them. Most of us would submit to screening if we were confident it could detect something early enough to save our life. But how valuable is it to have a medical screening program that "finds" disease in a third of the entire population?

It's worth being reminded the combined factors of age and weight means most of us are sliding towards metabolic problems naturally. Which is to say, as we get older, our blood pressure rises, we usually become heavier and these factors typically cause some level of 'insulin resistance,' which is the precursor to diabetes. It's not to say this is good, but for many of us, it's natural.

But do they actually "screen" people for Syndrome X? Doctors already routinely test for blood cholesterol, sugar and pressure, as well as nag us about our weight. Some groups recommend it, but there is a problem right from the start: there are contradictory and varying definitions of Syndrome X. The International Diabetes Federation defines it as someone who is obese with raised triglycerides, reduced HDL cholesterol, high blood pressure and high blood sugars (what is called increased fasting blood sugar.) The World Health Organization says if you've got "impaired glucose tolerance" (diabetes symptoms) along with two of the following: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity or microalbuminemia (protein in your urine indicating kidney problems) then you have the disease. Other definitions also abound.

What does the evidence say? A review by the Mayo Clinic in 2006 said the way Syndrome X was diagnosed was "arbitrary and not evidence based" and another review in 2008 in the *Lancet* said that measuring metabolic syndrome was a lousy way to determine a person's risk of future cardiovascular disease. The authors of that review noted there are better and more accurate ways to predict cardiovascular disease and diabetes and that fasting blood sugar measurement is a cheaper and easier test and a better predictor of future diabetes than a diagnosis of metabolic syndrome. Other organizations such as the American Diabetes Association and the European Association for the Study of Diabetes have warned that clinicians should

avoid using the term "metabolic syndrome," reasoning if you have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, doctors should treat those risk factors individually. Their 2005 joint statement on the issue wondered "whether medical science is doing any good by drawing attention to and labelling millions of people with a presumed disease that does not stand on firm ground."

Who is behind pushing this diagnosis?

We know that Syndrome X easily fits the "more is better" ideology underlying the medical screening paradigm, which is of great benefit to pharmaceutical or medical lab investors. One commentator, Joanna Breitstein, writing in *PharmExec* magazine in 2004 noted drug companies eager to sell metabolic syndrome drugs have sponsored initiatives that emphasize the connection between insulin resistance and cardiovascular disease and said that "metabolic syndrome promises to as big as or bigger than the emergence of a market for cholesterol lowering drugs."

There have been a number of drugs specifically developed to treat metabolic syndrome including the drug rimonabant, launched in Europe in 2006 and subsequently withdrawn because of the severe depression it caused. Other proof the drug industry is interested in Syndrome X hits close to home; a clinic specializing in metabolic syndrome opened in 2006 at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, thanks in part to a $1.6-million grant from AstraZeneca. The University of Montreal began "Metabolic Syndrome Awareness Days" in 2006 to raise awareness and screen people for metabolic syndrome. Overseas, there's activity as well. In 2007, Novartis Turkey began a campaign to educate doctors and the public about metabolic syndrome and screening and in 2008 Japan started a nationwide metabolic syndrome screening program.

People and organizations pushing Syndrome X (including the American Heart Association and the WHO) say that such a diagnosis can be a helpful reminder for doctors. They reason if they find one symptom of metabolic syndrome in a patient, they may be twigged to pursue more. Hmm. Others have said people might like having a label such as Syndrome X – it's something they can hang onto and perhaps offers an easy escape from personal responsibility.

## How valuable is it to have a medical screening program that "finds" disease in a third of the entire population?

There's a simple fact behind all of this: many of the symptoms of metabolic syndrome are caused largely by both genetic and lifestyle factors. You can't do much about your genes, but we know the quantity and quality of food you eat and the amount of exercise you get are all important factors.

The gurus on screening at the United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommend screening of all adults for obesity, hypertension, diabetes and cholesterol. Groups like the American Diabetes Association, American Cancer Society and American Heart Association endorse preventive screenings on a regular basis, as well as sponsoring initiatives to encourage workplace screening for "risks leading to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke and metabolic syndrome."

It seems to me that, above all, Syndrome X is a gateway diagnosis that may lead to more and more prescriptions yet whether it leads to more and more disease prevention is certainly not clear.

By all means, if you are worried about your health, go and get your blood pressure, glucose or lipid (cholesterol) levels screened and find out if you have Syndrome X. It likely won't change your life, but it will likely lead to more prescriptions.

Helping people work towards a healthier lifestyle is probably the best thing our doctors can do and I would think energy spent doing that could be far more useful than slapping on a scientific label to a problem that just leads to more drugs.

In a final irony about screening people for this condition the physician, Dr. Gerald Reaven, who coined the term "Syndrome X" in 1988 and proposed insulin resistance as its underlying cause, later recanted. Just as the syndrome was gaining speed among the drug companies and medical authorities, he published a paper in 2006 saying that physicians should stop giving this diagnosis to patients.

**Alan Cassels** is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. Read more of what he's writing about at www.alancassels.com

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# 5 biggest stressors

... and solutions

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**Emotion:** The stressful thoughts that swirl around our heads all day.

**Environment:** Could be the city you're in, extreme heat, a stressful office.

**Dietary:** Not just eating the wrong foods, but worrying about your diet.

**Health:** Chronic illness, chronic pain, chronic inflammation.

**Lack of Sleep:** Causes weight gain, irritability, job issues, health issues.

## The solutions:

**Emotion**: You can always change how you respond to a stressor. You can change the way you respond to a spouse or a boss. It is the one thing you can absolutely change.

**Environment**: Take control of your environment. Intentionally find places that relax you. Spend time in your backyard, put an air purifier in your home or office and stay well hydrated; it helps with the heat stress.

**Dietary**: Get in control of your emotions. Eat things that are real food. Eat it before man messes it up. Don't be a slave to any one food.

**Heath**: Chronic problems? There are solutions. It could be fish oils (anti-inflammatory). You must be diligent in staying on the cause and not the symptom.

**Lack of sleep**: Many times people can't sleep because they're *stressed*. Their daily sleep rate cycles are disrupted. Melatonin and other "adaptogens" will help to reset the sleep cycle.

**Dr. Eldred Taylor** and **Ava Bell Taylor** co-authored **The Stress Connection** and **Are Your Hormones Making You Sick? A Woman's Guide to Better Health Through Hormonal Balance**.

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Geoff Olson



# Plant *spirit medicine*

## Experts weigh in on the health benefits of mind-altering plants

Plants don't do much compared to animals. They're sedentary sorts, even with time-lapse photography. We're talking about vegetative, botanical bores. Right?

Wrong, according to Dennis McKenna, who argues against the standard take on plants. The droll ethnopharmacologist is struggling with an uncooperative Powerbook as he launches into a presentation at UBC on the co-evolution of humans and plants. The genetic destinies of these two kingdoms have been tied together for tens of thousands of years, he argues. He notes that plants are "virtuoso chemists that use messenger molecules as territorial signals, speaking to fungi, insects, and herbivores. They eat light and spin out all this chemistry: the secondary compounds… that we humans value as medicines as flavourings, as dyes as perfumes, as cosmetics and all the kind of things that make our life richer and sensorily more interesting."

McKenna believes western culture needs a rethink of its attitudes toward plant life in general, and psychotropic plants in particular. He spoke at the "Spirit Plant Medicine" conference held recently at UBC. The conference organizers, Ashley Rose and Andrew Rezmer of Conscious Living Radio, brought together a diverse range of speakers, including policy analysts, ethnobotanists, filmmakers, psychologists, therapists and artists. The theme of the conference was the healing properties and potential of what are known in traditional cultures as "sacred" plants.

Our most effective drugs, those that have outlasted colonial empires and the life spans of patents, did not originate as the intellectual property of pharmaceutical companies. They were the plant-based medicines of indigenous healers from across the world. (Quinine is used to treat malaria. Rattlebox is used to treat skin cancer. Henbane is used as a sedative. Autumn Crocus treats gout. Mayapple is an anti-tumour agent. Willow gives us aspirin, etc.) Among the most important plants in the indigenous pharmacopeia, and the most problematic for industrialized nations, are those species that alter human consciousness.

Plant-human co-evolution extends back into the mists of prehistory, along with the human impulse to seek out psychoactive substances. In fact, scientists have determined that a wide range of animals regularly seek out mood-altering plants. Whether it's a group of elks seeking out a late-season outcrop of fermented berries, bighorn sheep nibbling on a narcotic species of lichen or commuters lining up for their morning Starbucks fix, there appears to be a cross-species drive for self-medication on this planet.

In 1956, Humphry Osmond, a British doctor working at a Saskatchewan hospital, coined the term "psychedelic" from the Greek roots for "mind revealing." The term refers to a broad range of substances that include peyote, LSD, and psilocybin, the primary active ingredient in so-called magic mushrooms. Mark Haden, who currently works in Addiction Services at Vancouver Coastal Health, spoke at the conference on the recent medical research on psychedelics, which unlike opiates and amphetamines, are nonaddictive. Psilocybin, LSD and MDMA all show promise in treating various health conditions. Among these are cancer-related anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, migraine and cluster headaches and obsessive-compulsive disorder. One of the most promising substances for treating drug addictions is ibogaine, derived from an African shrub-root alkaloid. After an eight to 20-hour dreamlike trip, proponents of ibogaine say, the subject emerges with new insight into his behaviour patterns and a greatly diminished desire for a fix.

In 2006, Donald MacPherson, then Drug Policy Co-coordinator for the city of Vancouver, co-authored a report that put ayahuasca and peyote in the category of "benefit," based on their medicinal use by aboriginal cultures and on clinical studies by researchers.

The story of ayahuasca, a non-addictive hallucinogenic tea from the Amazon, tells of the promise and perils of "sacred plants" in the post-industrial world. Indigenous people traditionally employ ayahuasca, also known as *yagé*, in healing ceremonies. It is not what you would call a recreational drug. The foul-tasting brew, made from cooking up two, synergistically-acting plants, induces vomiting and excretion as a preface to its psychedelic effects. According to reports from experiencers, the visions can range from punishing to sublime. The sensations can range from cosmic insignificance to an ecstatic connection with the living world. Personal issues and private traumas may become transparent. Anthropologist Jeremy Narby, who spoke via Skype at the conference, claims scientists who have used the substance have experienced sudden, remarkable insights into long-standing research problems.

In spite of the high somatic entrance fee – it's also know indigenously as *La Purga* – this "harsh teacher" is now a big deal for tourists of the psyche. Travellers from across the world arrive in the Amazon area looking for medicine men, or *curanderos*, to whack open their unconscious minds like prize-filled *piñatas*. Journalists from glossy publications fly down on the company dime to blow their minds through an archaic biotechnology of the soul and try to describe the indescribable. (The domestic

use of ayahuasca is currently in something of a legal limbo in Canada.)

Harvard University ethnobotanist Richard Evan Schultes first identified ayahuasca's active ingredients in the early 1950's. Although the jungle-trekking professor had no time for the hippies and beatniks that retraced his steps, he introduced a thrill-seeking beat writer William Burroughs to the potion. In 1953, Burroughs arrived in Bogotá and wrote back to his poet friend Allen Ginsberg about the terrifying visions produced by a hideous-tasting concoction the locals called *yagé*. Ginsberg, enticed into the jungle and a *yagé* ceremony some years later, wrote Burroughs back about own experiences, which included sensing a being that "was like some great void, surrounded by all creation – particularly coloured snakes." (Snakes are rumoured to be dependable visitors in ayahuasca visions.)

**The Nobel Prize-wining biochemist Kary Mullis has claimed he came up with the idea for the "polymerase chain reaction," a scientifically revolutionary technique for copying fragments of DNA, while under the influence of LSD. Spiritual experiences are also not uncommon.**

Burroughs and Ginsberg's correspondence, documented in *The Yagé Letters* (published in 1963), lit up some minor interest in the cultural fringe, but the plant concoction got its biggest boost with the Amazonian travelogues of the McKenna brothers. In the mid-seventies, Terence and his younger brother Dennis set off into the rainforest to investigate the Gaian "Overmind," preserving their hallucinogenic explorations in the arcane but entertaining texts *The Invisible Landscape* and *True Hallucinations*.

The situation today can be rather disappointing for some travellers seeking a 'genuine' shamanic experience with ayahuasca. Ethnobotanist Kat Harrison spoke at the UBC conference on how "lucky kids" from the rich First World arrive into "an economy of scarcity," looking for all the "wonderful things" that the indigenous people are surely eager to share. Naive travellers looking to turn the inside of their skulls into IMAX screens might as well be hitting the tarmac with bull's-eyes on their backs, however. Harrison paints a picture of the mindset at work: young explorers "sitting outside a gringo café" are chanced on by a local claiming to be a "medicine man" and isn't it just marvellous that the universe had their paths cross? "That's the level of discernment I'm talking about," she says.

In Iquitos, Peru, one of the hotspots of ayahuasca tourism, "zombie kids" can be seen drifting around town, Harrison says. These are young tourists who have been psychologically bruised by quickie ceremonies with bad concoctions. These train wrecks are partly the unfortunate outcome of misunderstanding across cultures, Harrison adds. Excessive demand from tourists is eliminating the plants that go into the ayahuasca brew from the Amazon basin. A peasant farmer with a hungry family to feed, who has hung out a shingle as a *curandero*, figures the white rich kids just want to obliterate their senses – so he finds the next best thing. Another speaker suggests some of these zombie kids may have been sold scopolamine, a potent tranquilizer; several others at the conference attested to sightings of "zombie kids" in Iquitos.

Dr. Gabor Mate ran a popular family practice in East Vancouver for two decades and once served as Medical Coordinator of the Palliative Care Unit at Vancouver Hospital. He shook his head as he shared a rumour about an ayahuasca gathering in the Gulf Islands. Up to 120 people at a time were left to plumb their own miseries and ecstasies, with a jukebox playing and an absent organizer, he learned. "It's a money making proposition, there's no context there and it's dangerous."

Probably the last thing Mate and other conference speakers want to see is another moral panic over yet another drug, especially one with so much therapeutic potential. In the psychedelic parlance, 'set and setting' are all important – frame *continued p.34...*


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# On becoming a vegetarian

I became a vegetarian in 1975 when I landed in Vancouver from London, UK and found myself sharing a cooperative house with five other people who were all vegetarians. The deal was we each took turns making dinner and because I loved cooking, instead of being daunted, I dashed out to buy a vegetarian cookbook that would teach me to cook something other than egg and cheese dishes.

I did not want the energy of suffering and inhumanity that pervades concentrated animal feedlot (CAFO) operations to become a part of me.

I happen to believe 'You are what you eat' so after swallowing John Robbins' *Diet for a New America*, I was clear I did not want the energy of suffering and inhumanity that pervades concentrated animal feedlot (CAFO) operations to become a part of me. It was at 23 Dunbar Street in Vancouver that I understood why I needed to become a vegetarian. I shed 30 pounds, felt my energy lighten and I had a much greater sense of well-being. There was no going back and I have been a healthy vegetarian ever since.

It seemed to me from conversations at dinner parties that people were anxious about getting enough protein in a vegetarian diet, but I assured them this was not a problem. Our bodies are composed of 20 percent protein by weight and adequate protein is important for tissue growth and repair, metabolic functioning and the formation of disease-fighting antibodies. Protein molecules are composed of building blocks called amino acids. There are 22 known amino acids, most of which are synthesized in the body. However, there are eight that cannot be synthesized and they are referred to as essential amino acids.

All eight essential amino acids must be present at the same time and in the right proportions for protein synthesis to occur. Grains, beans, nuts, seeds and dairy are valuable sources of these essential amino acids and when combined ensure an adequate intake of amino acids for complete protein synthesis. One of the three combinations below – along with fresh vegetables from the garden – means you can quit worrying about getting enough protein in your diet.

1. Grains combined with beans.
2. Grains combined with dairy products.
3. Beans combined with seeds.

If everyone in the US went vegetarian just for one day, the nation would save:

- 100 billion gallons of water, enough to supply all the homes in New England for almost 4 months.
- 1.5 billion pounds of crops otherwise fed to livestock, enough to feed the state of New Mexico for more than a year.
- 70 million gallons of gas, enough to fuel all the cars of Canada and Mexico combined with plenty to spare.
- 3 million acres of land, an area more than twice the size of Delaware.
- 33 tons of antibiotics.

(Source: Kathy Freston, Huffington Post, www.alternet.org/story/134650/)

Then there's the global politics of making meat the centre of the meal. I find it hard to stomach that we grow corn and grains to feed to animals when so many of us are going hungry. Imagine how easily we could feed the world if members of the meat-eating society cut back to eating meat once a week. And imagine how much suffering to animals we could alleviate if we banned concentrated animal feedlot operations.

**Carolyn Herriot** is author of **A Year on the Garden Path, a 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide** and **The Zero Mile Diet: A Year-round Guide to Growing Organic Food** (Harbour Publishing). She grows 'Seeds of Victory' at the Garden Path Centre in Victoria, BC. www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath/ The Garden Path Centre is open to visitors every Friday, 10am-6pm until September 25, 2011.

# Kids can cook

Would you like your kids to have fun in the kitchen while learning to make nutritious foods for themselves? The ideal way for children to learn about good nutrition is if they become our little kitchen helpers starting from the time they can hold a plastic spoon. Youngsters learn to like veggies when they can grasp and gnaw on a carrot stick, pick up peas or corn niblets with tiny fingers and watch a tomato plant bear fruit on a balcony. As they get older, children can help to prepare one or more favourite meals each week and eventually take an occasional turn as the main chef. It helps to set up a cheery atmosphere with music, with tasting allowed.

For some youngsters, it's an eye opener to learn that soup doesn't just come from a can and pizza doesn't always come in a box. In fact, pizzas don't need to be grease-laden; they can be a healthy way to pack lots of veggies into family menus. If children aren't fond of homemade soups or cooked vegetables, they may become more 'vegetable friendly' when they assist with preparation and perhaps help choose the recipe or ingredients. To start, they can wash the carrots. When they are older and can handle knives safely, they may assist with chopping. We'll likely find that half the carrot coins are eaten long before the soup starts cooking.

Most people live on six to 10 favourite meals, repeated over and over. It can help to introduce your kids to a few recipes that are health supportive that they will also love.

It is well known that most people live on six to 10 favourite meals, repeated over and over. It can help to introduce your kids to a few recipes that are health supportive that they will also love. And it can help reduce mom or dad's stress of feeling like a short order cook. Tacos, falafels and spaghetti are favourites that work for families, including non-vegetarian, vegetarian and vegan eaters.

**To introduce your kids to cooking, try out Kids Can Cook classes** (Fraser Valley) for youngsters aged nine to 14 with teacher and personal chef Marianne Honeywell and registered dietitian Vesanto Melina. Classes include a morning snack and lunch. To register, email vesanto@nutrispeak.com or call 604-888-8713.

**August 6 recipes**: Smoothies, hummus, raw veggies, soup, fruit crumble, 10AM-2PM, $75,

**August 20 recipes**: Yogurt and fruit parfaits, healthy pizza, salad & dressing, chocolate lava cakes. 10AM-2PM, $75. Location: North Langley near 200th Street exit. Highway #1 is 45 minutes east of downtown Vancouver. For classes at other times and locations, check out www.dizzywhisk.com.

Vesanto Melina is co-author of **Raising Vegetarian Children, Becoming Vegetarian, Becoming Vegan, Becoming Raw** and the **Food Allergy Survival Guide.** www.nutrispeak.com

## Fudgesicles: a cool, healthy treat

Cool off in hot weather with this recipe for Fudgesicles, which, believe it or not, are also a source of protein. Popsicle molds are available from dollar stores.

**Makes 6 popsicles (depending on size of mold)**

2/3 cup fortified chocolate soymilk
2 tbsp cocoa or carob powder
8 oz (1 cup) firm silken tofu
1/4 cup pure maple syrup

Place all ingredients in a blender and puree for 1 to 2 minutes until smooth. Pour into popsicle molds. Freeze until solid. Popsicles take about 4 hours to freeze, however, the exact time will depend on your freezer temperature. Each can be removed from its mold by running warm water over the outside of the mold, by dipping it in warm water or by squeezing it in your hand for a few minutes.

Per Fudgsicle: calories: 86; protein: 4 g; carbohydrate: 15 g; fat: 2 g.

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# Create your own reality

If we are not happy with our lives, we tend to attribute our current state to bad luck, other people or to simply not having been blessed as much as others. We might feel bitter, disappointed, angry or depressed and it is easy to keep our focus on what is missing rather than on what is present.

If happiness were a result of what we have, others who are lacking what our ego perceives we lack should be unhappy too. But clearly this is not the case. Those in Third World countries who live in comparative poverty often have indomitable spirits. They love, laugh, dance and are thankful for the smallest things.

If happiness were a result of financial abundance, all millionaires would be happy and those with lesser means would be unhappy. Yet one of the happiest couples I have met had two small children and could barely make ends meet. When they described their upcoming vacation – where all they could afford was to take their little tent to a nearby lake for a few days – they were so happy and excited about their upcoming adventure.

If happiness were a result of good health, how would we explain the courageous way in which some people with terminal illnesses spread love and joy to all those around them.

> It is not the current state of our lives that determines how we feel, but rather it is our *perspective* … This means we have a *choice* about how we feel in any situation.

We could go on and on with examples, but it seems clear it is not the current state of our lives that determines how we feel, but rather it is our *perspective* that makes all the difference. This means we have a *choice* about how we feel in any situation.

The ego part of our being does not realize this. Ego has a mind of its own and reacts automatically, based on past experience or beliefs we hold. When ego is in control, we cannot even imagine feeling any different about what is happening in our lives. If we think someone has hurt us, it's pretty black and white as far as ego is concerned. It is not interested in looking at the situation from any other perspective.

The problem with this is that ego keeps us stuck. Ego is like a puppet on a string controlled by all things in the external world. Up/down/happy/sad/agitated/calm: it all depends on what happens out there. Since ego does nothing to change its perspective, things just seem to keep piling up, reinforcing all the old limiting beliefs. We can begin to stagnate and life seems like a series of endless struggles.

The truth is life is full of challenges. Things will not always go well; sometimes they may go very badly. However, we can control our emotional climate in the same way we control the temperature in our homes with a thermostat. We can set our internal 'thermostat' by deciding to be a problem solver, action taker and a mindful, peaceful, wise being. Of course we must transcend the judgments, reactions and the "Chicken Little" tendencies of ego.

Admittedly, this is the big challenge for those who choose conscious growth and evolution. It is a process requiring mindful attention to our inner world, self-honesty and a commitment to make the most of our time in this Earth school. It is also rewarding, even as we take those first tentative baby steps.

**Gwen Randall-Young** is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, CDs and the new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca See display ad this issue.

Paulette Marchetti

# Vancouver Tibet Festival

## A benefit for the Canadian Tibetan Resettlement Project

In 2007, His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked Prime Minister Stephen Harper if Canada would offer Tibetans living in Arunachal Pradesh the opportunity to immigrate to Canada. His Holiness had a very specific reason for requesting that all the potential immigrants under this program be chosen from the four Tibetan refugee camps in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The remoteness and inaccessibility of the region is matched only by the very dire conditions that most of the Tibetan refugees endure.

photo by Jimmy Medellin.

In December 2010, the request of His Holiness was granted. The Hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, announced a government initiative that would see Canada welcome 1,000 displaced Tibetans from Arunachal Pradesh. The Tibetans living there lead a very simple life consisting mainly of subsistence farming. They struggle to feed their families due to the intensity of monsoons in the region, which affects the success of their harvest and lacking a clean water system, they drink water from the rivers, which often leads to disease. Many children die of common childhood illnesses as the families have difficulty accessing medical care. And many do not go to school, as they are needed to work on the family farm. Those who are able to complete grade eight are unable to further their education due to lack of funds. Local job opportunities for youth are few: farming, going into the army (for males) or becoming a beautician (for females).

The Canada Tibet Committee has incorporated the Project Tibet Society to oversee all aspects of the resettlement project. Unfortunately, no government funds are attached to the project and its success depends on fundraising initiatives and individual generosity. Much help is needed. For more information or to volunteer please contact CTCoffice@tibet.ca or join the project at www.facebook.com/tibetresettlementproject

An upcoming fundraiser for the Tibetan Resettlement Project, the second annual Vancouver Tibet Festival is being organized by the Tibetan Cultural Society of BC and the Tsengdok Monastery Association. The resettlement project will be the primary recipient of the proceeds, however, in keeping with the compassionate wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a small percentage will be donated to the Japanese Tsunami relief work.

The Tibet festival celebrates the richness of the Tibetan culture. It will open with prayers by Chief Leonard George and Tibetan Buddhist monks. It includes Tibetan food, music, dance, artists' demonstrations, sale tables and a silent auction. The highly acclaimed musician Jamyang Yeshi will perform. See the full program at www.tsengdokrinpoche.com/tibetfestival2011.htm, call 604-248-4930 (ext. 2031) or email pkakho@shaw.ca

**Vancouver Tibet Festival:** August 27, 11AM-7PM, VanDusen Garden Floral Hall, 5251 Oak Street (at 37th ).

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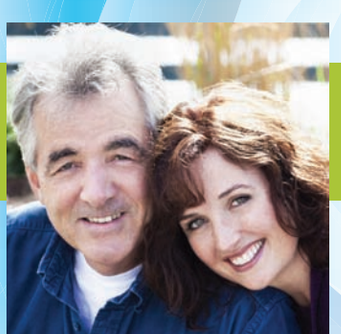

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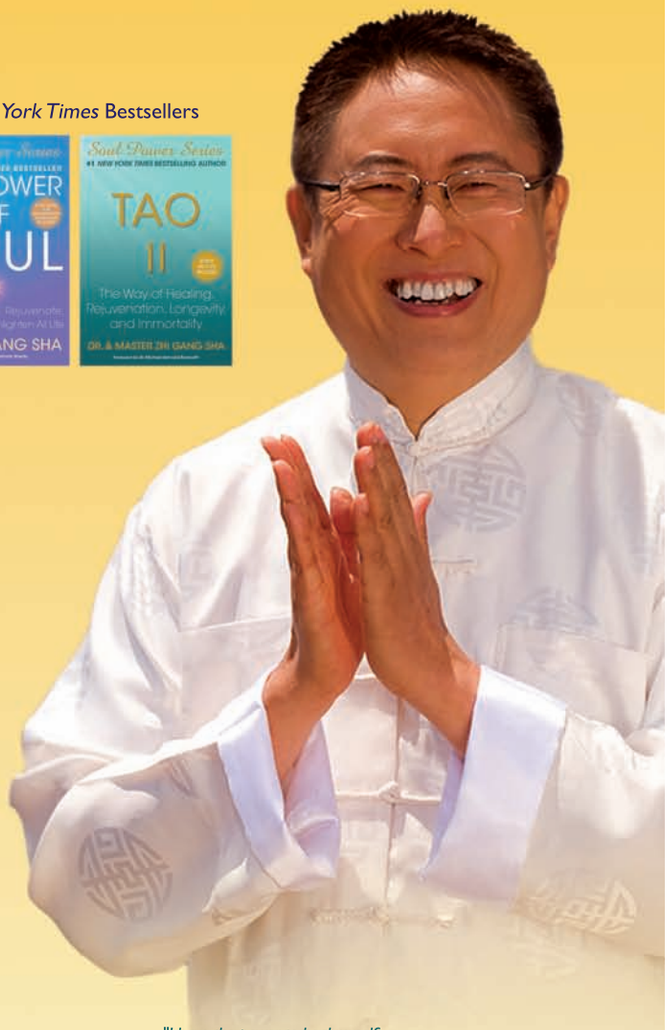
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# Just now

## an interview with Eckhart Tolle

*To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of Common Ground. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.*

**JR:** In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

**ET:** Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

**JR:** And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

**ET:** Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

**JR:** At least you're out of denial.

**ET:** Yes, that's why in the film A Beautiful Mind, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

**JR:** I remember you saying before you published your last book that the next one would be about why there isn't peace on this planet. Was finding a solution one of the major intentions of A New Earth?

**ET:** Yes, to see the nature of the major dysfunction. That's why I talk quite a bit about the ego in this book. We need to recognize the nature of the dysfunction. Sometimes, even very great Eastern teachers sometimes neglect that part because they're not really touched by the magnitude of, especially, the Western ego. So it's very important for us to see the dysfunction so that we can recognize it when it arises.

Part of the new book is about recognizing the ego, which I regard as a semi-autonomous energy. It's an energy field. Every thought you think is an energy field. It has a form and then it dissolves and then there is another form. The ego itself is an energy field and it has a collective and individual aspect. Every indi-

vidual ego is part of the collective. They're connected. Every individual is a manifestation of the collective. To recognize that is essential because the ego, being a very clever entity, has many ways of reappearing. Even if you've seen it in one disguise, it can suddenly reappear in a new one.

You might suddenly realize your whole sense of self, identity, is being derived from your possessions and social position. You see that your whole sense of identity is bound up with that and you recognize one aspect of ego. Well, usually it only comes to people when they suffer, when the identification with something no longer works…

Eckhart Tolle with *Common Ground* publisher Joseph Roberts. Photo by Ishi Dinim.

It's recognizing the ego in its many disguises. I've met Buddhist monks who had enormous egos without knowing it. I remember being in a monastery afraid to approach them because they seemed so aloof. Yet I've met other Buddhist monks who were like little children and it was a joy to talk to them because they'd laugh and not take themselves seriously at all. They didn't take the whole Buddhist thing seriously either, yet they practised it knowing it was only a form and they weren't identified with it.

There's a dimension in us that has nothing to do with content. Self-realization is that I am not that. I'm not my story, not my grievances and hang-ups, not the story of me that I'm telling other people at parties or repeating in my head again and again. That is only form. It's temporary.

When you see what you're not, it's already liberating. Something inside you breathes a sigh of relief. Then, of course, the mind begins to ask, "What are you if you are not that?" It wants an answer. In other words, it wants some new form. It wants a new thought. There must be a thought that I am. But it doesn't work like that. That's why the great book the Tao Te Ching starts with the line that the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao because Tao – in the ancient Chinese way of putting it – is the formless dimension. You could say pure consciousness, but with any term we use we have to be careful it's not mistaken for "It." Otherwise, the mind comes in and says, "Oh, consciousness, yes. I believe that I'm consciousness." It's not another belief. It's finding that spaciousness inside yourself that's there when you let go of identification of form.

Excerpted from **Just now: a two-part interview with Eckhart Tolle** by Joseph Roberts. Read the full interview online. Go to www.commonground.ca Click on archives. Click on 2007 at the top of the page. For part one, click on September 2007. For part two, click on October 2007.


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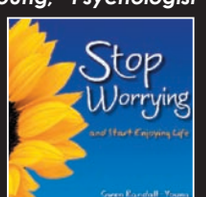

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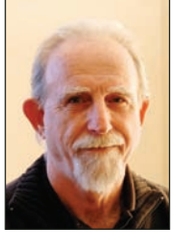

Mac McLaughlin



# StarWise August 2011

THE VANCOUVER riot was sheer lunacy and it had to have been a bunch of lunatics that instigated it and participated in it. How could our very own kids, wholesome 'Canucks' that they are, with all the privileges of the very free and permissive society they live in, engage in such mayhem and destruction? After some severe ass chewing and major finger pointing among the power types, everyone walked away scratching their heads in wonderment as to what the hell happened to our beautiful city.

Even among the competent astrologers, no one knew that game seven was heading our way on June 15, until it was nearly upon us. While it is too late to close the barn door on this one, it might be possible for us to learn from our mistakes and use all of the facilities and tools available when we're in the midst of long-term planning for future major events.

The ancients had this stuff figured out and you can bet your bottom loonie they kept a keen eye on what the stars had to say. They were well aware of the Moon's effect upon all of life's activities and events. Full Moons, eclipses and

**ARIES** Mar 21 - Apr 19
Hanta Yo. It means, "clear the way." The August stars are swaying in your favour. It is important you live in your truth. Although you may want to play, you may find there are many hurdles and challenges for you to overcome.

**TAURUS** Apr 20 - May 21
Abundance, popularity and good timing, along with fortuitous and serendipitous events, are just a few of the many blessings Jupiter brings your way throughout the year. Gambling, speculation, overspending and sloppy thinking can bring trouble though. Moderation in all things is best.

**GEMINI** May 22 - Jun 20
Dear old Mercury retrograde takes place and its effects will be felt throughout the month. Behave like the three monkeys: Hear, see and speak no evil. Even with that, others are likely to get you wrong. Otherwise, let the good times roll.

**CANCER** Jun 21 - Jul 22
Mars pays a visit for several weeks stirring up all kinds of excitement, restlessness, action, attraction, danger and drama. Take it easy or take it hard. It's a great time for adventure and discovery and also a time to tread lightly.

**LEO** Jul 23 - Aug 22
Daddy's home! The Sun, Venus and Mercury move through your sign bringing, light, love, laughter and news. However, retrograde Mercury opposite to Neptune can bring misunderstandings, misdirection and downright fraud. Honesty is the only policy and love is the only currency.

**VIRGO** Aug 23 - Sep 22
Remember that guy Murphy? Well, he's around. Murphy's law will be in effect throughout the month. Concentration, deliberation, honesty and patience will get you through. The Virgo new Moon on August 28 is special and will bring forth unique circumstances and opportunities throughout September.

**LIBRA** Sep 23 - Oct 22
Many people dread the cycles of Saturn as it is said he brings impoverishment and illness. Yet, contrarily, Saturn brings the greatest rewards and the sweetest freedom once his seemingly astringent lessons are digested and assimilated. A profound wisdom dawns like the Sun's rays on a new day.

**SCORPIO** Oct 23 - Nov 21
Opportunities regarding employment and travel come up. August is a month filled with complexities and mysteries. Many Scorpios are deeply intuitive and now is a time this gift will come into play. 'Truth and honour' is the mantra of the times.

such were harbingers of positive or negative experiences. Every day, the Moon moves about 13 degrees of longitude with the fixed stars in the background. The ancients called these 13-degree increments 'nakshatras' or lunar mansions. They noticed that, when the moon moved through some of these lunar mansions, there were happy and peaceful times while other nakshatras would bring an evil chill to the air with horrendous events taking place.

Well, guess what folks? The full Moon lunar eclipse on June 15 took place while the moon was moving though the 19th nakshatra named Mula. The goddess Nirritti presides over this nakshatra and she is the goddess of destruction and mayhem. Anger, violence, hostilities and riotous energies prevail when the Moon moves through this nakshatra. Add to the equation the full Moon eclipse energy, a massive crowd fuelled by alcohol and a disappointing loss and, as they say, the rest is history.

Now the spin masters have us voting yes or no on the HST and as we know, "Yes" means no and "No" means yes. The stars will assist on this one as Mercury goes retrograde on August 2 while in opposition to Neptune. This configuration stays in place throughout the first half of August, bringing confusion, obstruction, deception, delays, misconception and other confoundedness that will make our collective heads spin. I don't know about you, but I'm heading to the beach.

**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22 - Dec 21
Your travel and romance sectors are alive and active. Family outings, times of great entertainment and laughter bring you through August nicely. Health and joint finances figure into the play. Foreign cultures and matters of the higher mind take precedence. A great learning curve takes hold.

**CAPRICORN** Dec 22 - Jan 19
August may prove to be hot. Mars, Uranus and Pluto form a T-square with your sign involved and the combination brings stress and certain dangers to the fore. You have your work cut out for you, but you might not mind.

**AQUARIUS** Jan 20 - Feb 19
The full moon on August 13 takes place in your sign. Venus, Mercury and Neptune are involved bringing a very dynamic and possibly magical time in which cupid's arrow finds his mark. Illusion and confusion have their play. Honesty, patience and clarity help immensely.

**PISCES** Feb 20 - Mar 20
The Mercury/Neptune opposition involves your sign and it might take awhile to sort through all that comes to pass in the first half of August. Dreams and intuition help in figuring out the way to go. Take your time before signing anything of importance.

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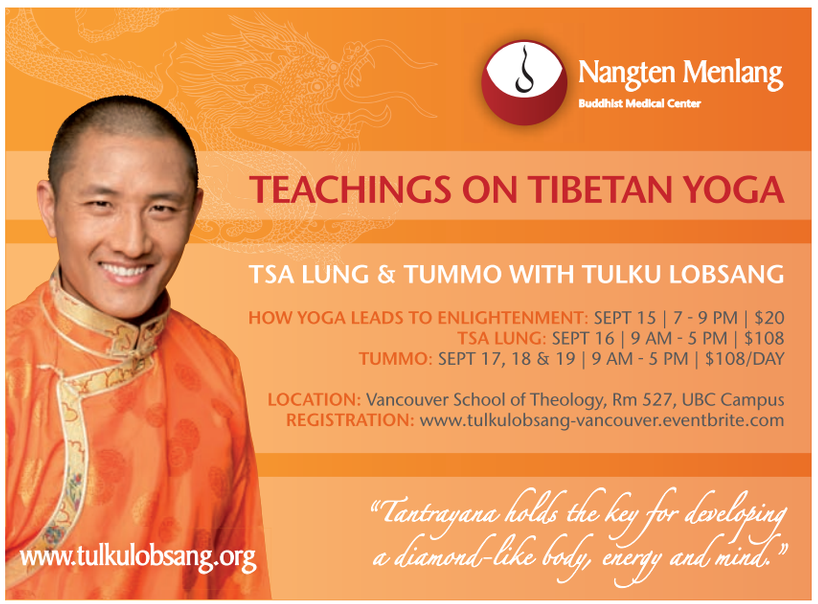
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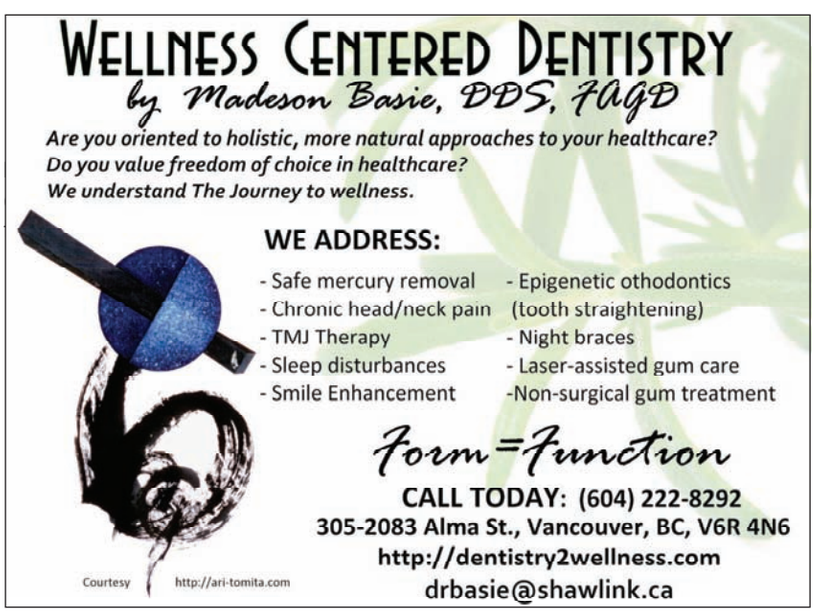
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**Science Matters** David Suzuki

# Biased research revealed

In their desperation to find even a tiny shred of peer-reviewed science to challenge the volumes of research from around the world about human-caused climate change, deniers have often held up Willie Soon's work.

Dr. Soon, an astrophysicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics, is known for studies that purportedly show that the Sun, and not CO2 emissions from human activity, is the main factor in climate change and that climate change in the 20th century wasn't that unusual to begin with. He has also argued that mercury emissions from burning coal are no big deal.

Now, in response to a Greenpeace investigation, Dr. Soon has admitted US oil and coal companies, including ExxonMobil, the American Petroleum Institute, Koch Industries and the world's largest coal-burning utility, Southern Company, have contributed more than $1 million over the past decade to his research. According to Greenpeace, every grant Dr. Soon has received since 2002 has been from oil or coal interests. This despite the fact he once told a US Senate hearing he had not been hired by, employed by, or received grants from any organization "that had taken advocacy positions with respect to the Kyoto protocol or the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change."

According to Greenpeace, every grant Dr. Soon has received since 2002 has been from oil or coal interests.

Dr. Soon has also been affiliated with a number of industry front groups, including the coal-funded Greening Earth Society and the Koch-Exxon-Scaife-funded George C. Marshall Institute, the Science and Public Policy Institute, the Center for Science and Public Policy, the Heartland Institute and Canada's Fraser Institute.

Correspondence uncovered by Greenpeace also found Dr. Soon led a plan in 2003 to undermine the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report years before it was even released in 2007.

It's not news the fossil fuel industry has funded an ongoing campaign of doubt and misinformation about the effects of its products and about the dangers of climate change – people and organizations including science historian Naomi Oreskes (author of *Merchants of Doubt*) and Greenpeace have been exposing these efforts for years. From hiring trolls and front groups to posting comments on websites, submitting letters to editors, writing opinion columns and sponsoring "scientific" research and holding conferences, it's all been well documented. (The same tactics have also been used by the tobacco industry.)

The latest revelation is a bit of an embarrassment for oil giant Exxon, though. The world's largest oil company had admitted it funded these efforts but promised in 2008 it would stop giving money to groups that lobbied against the need to find clean energy sources.

It's also an embarrassment for those who, in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence, deny the existence of climate change – or admit that it's happening but say we can't and shouldn't do anything about it.

After all their digging, deniers have only been able to find a few minor errors in the volumes of peer-reviewed science about climate change and have had to rely on manufactured scandals and conspiracy theories to bolster their arguments. It only takes a bit of investigating to poke holes in the scant bits of research that have attempted to discredit real climate science. Let's stop wasting our time on deniers. It would be better spent trying to resolve the serious problems we have created.

Written with contributions from **Ian Hanington**, communications and editorial specialist.
www.davidsuzuki.org

# Canada's *biggest tree*

## Celebrate the International Year of Forests and protect our ancient giants

photo by TJ Watt. Courtesy Ancient Forest Alliance.

Canada's largest tree, a western redcedar named the "Cheewhat Giant" stands in a remote location near Cheewhat Lake west of Lake Cowichan. The tree is over six meters (20 feet) in trunk diameter, 56 meters (182 feet) in height and 450 cubic meters in timber volume (or 450 regular telephone poles' worth of wood). Luckily, the tree, discovered in 1988, is just within the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, which was created in 1971.

Extensive logging of the last unprotected old-growth forests adjacent to the national park is taking place in the "West Coast Trail Wilderness" of the Klanawa, Rosander, Upper Nitinat, Upper Walbran, Gordon, Hadikin Lake and San Juan Valleys as the market for cedar rebounds.

"Pacific Rim is a very narrow, linear park just a couple kilometres wide along much of the West Coast Trail. Old-growth logging adjacent to the park is silting up salmon streams that flow into the park, diminishing the contiguous wildlife habitat and undermining the wilderness experience for hikers who hear the roar of chainsaws through the narrow buffer of trees," states Ken Wu, Ancient Forest Alliance co-founder. "However, more importantly, the last unprotected ancient forests adjacent to the West Coast Trail unit are literally the grandest forests left in Canada. They must be protected and we need a forward thinking government to do so."

Former Member of Parliament for the riding of Juan de Fuca, Keith Martin, proposed to include these adjacent old-growth forests within an expanded Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.

"Keith Martin had a very visionary proposal and I hope other politicians will also rise to the moral imperative to protect our ancient forests," states TJ Watt, Ancient Forest Alliance co-founder. "Future generations will look back at the majority of BC's politicians today who still sanction the elimination of our last endangered old-growth forests on Vancouver Island, despite the second-growth alternative for logging, and see them as lacking vision, compassion and a spine. We desperately need more politicians with courage and wisdom to step forward."

Satellite photos show that about 75 percent of the original, productive old-growth forests on Vancouver Island have been logged, including 90 percent of the valley bottoms where the largest trees grow and most biodiversity is found.

The BC government regularly inflates the statistics on the amount of remaining coastal old-growth forests as part of its public relations spin by including vast tracts of stunted "bonsai" forests in bogs and high subalpine reaches with small trees of low or no commercial value.

"It's like counting your fake Monopoly money with your real money and claiming to be a millionaire, so stop worrying about your runaway spending habits," stated TJ Watt.

Despite new markets in China, BC's coastal forest industry is still a shadow of what it once was. The coastal industry's 20-year decline at its root has been driven by resource depletion as the largest ancient trees in the valley bottoms and lower slopes have been largely logged-off. This has resulted in diminishing returns as the remaining trees get smaller, lower in value and more expensive to reach high up mountainsides and far away in valley headwaters.

The resulting loss of tens of thousands of rural jobs has also been paralleled by the increasing collapse of BC's old-growth ecosystems, with plummeting salmon, steelhead, black-tailed deer, cougar, mountain caribou, marbled murrelet and spotted owl populations (only five individuals left in BC's wilds today).

"The depletion of BC's biggest, best old-growth stands and the resulting collapse of ecosystems and rural communities has parallels throughout the history of resource extraction. We've seen it with countless fishing-down-the-food chain examples, such as the collapse of the Atlantic cod stocks. Why would we let this destructive history of blind greed repeat itself in BC's forests?" asked Ken Wu. "It's time for politicians to understand that the consequences of supporting callous resource depletion policies are not born out only in rural communities and the demise of millions of living creatures, but also in their own political careers."

The Ancient Forest Alliance is working to raise funds for a fall campaign in provincial swing ridings calling on the BC government to protect our endangered old-growth forests, ensure sustainable second-growth forestry and end raw log exports to foreign mills.

Source: Ancient Forest Alliance founders **Ken Wu** and **TJ Watt**, www.ancientforestalliance.org

## 2011 International Year of Forests
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The UN-designated International Year of Forests is an open invitation to the world community to come together and work with governments, international organizations and civil society to ensure that our forests are managed sustainably for current and future generations. Forests are home to 80 percent of our terrestrial biodiversity globally. Three-hundred-million people live in forests around the world. They cover 30 percent of our total land value. More than 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods. Thirty percent of the world's forests are used for the production of wood and non-wood products.

Lucy Sharratt



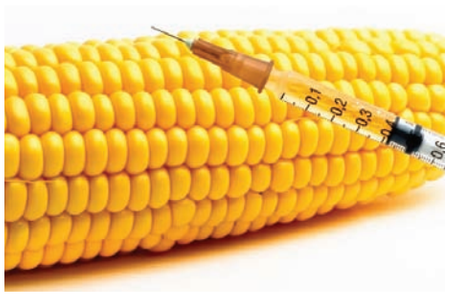
# GM SmartStax corn risks exposed

This year, we are eating from the first harvest of Monsanto's eight-trait "SmartStax" genetically modified (GM) corn. Approved in 2009 and grown for the first time in North America last year, the new GM corn appears as processed food ingredients and feed for dairy and meat animals.

Canada's approval of SmartStax corn exposed just how little Health Canada cares to investigate the potential risks of GM crops and foods – in the case of SmartStax, not at all. Now the process to approve SmartStax in Europe has identified many of the risk issues being ignored on both sides of the ocean. Confidential industry summaries of data as well as critiques by European experts show more studies must be done to determine any potential health and environmental risks.

### No risk assessment in Canada

In July 2009, Monsanto and Dow AgroSciences announced they had received approval in Canada and the US to introduce their new eight-trait GM corn SmartStax (it combines technologies from both companies). However, Health Canada did not actually assess SmartStax for human health safety. Because the individual eight GM traits were previously approved in separate crops, Canadian regulators decided there was nothing new in combining the eight together. Health Canada assumed the corn was a harmless amalgam of GM traits and did not even issue any paperwork to rubberstamp its approval.



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In September 2010, the GMO Panel of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded SmartStax "is unlikely to have adverse effects on human and animal health and the environment, in the context of its intended uses." Unlike in Canada, the European Authority actually looked at some industry documents (summarizes of studies). The German non-governmental group Testbiotech published a report in June that examined these documents as well as critiques from regulators in European countries. Its report points to many safety questions still not being addressed in Europe – questions Health Canada should have asked but never did (Testbiotech, June 2011, "How industry and EFSA have been systematically undermining the risk assessment of 'SmartStax" www.testbiotech.de/node/515)

### More GM traits, more risks?

SmartStax corn is the first GM crop that has more than three GM traits "stacked" together. SmartStax produces six different insecticidal toxins (Bt toxins) and is tolerant to two herbicides. SmartStax is also known as MON 89034 x 1507 x MON 88017 x 59122, which represents the four GM events or parental lines bred together to make SmartStax. The possible implications of such complexity were entirely overlooked by Health Canada.

Canadian regulation is essentially based on the view that moving genes around is not inherently risky. Instead of examining the process of genetic engineering, Canada evaluates the end product using, in part, the widely discredited concept of "substantial equivalence." Substantial equivalence allows for a comparison of a GM organism with its "equivalent" already out in the environment with a "history of safe use." Health Canada's approval of SmartStax is an extreme application of substantial equivalence. The European Food Safety Authority chose a similar approach. As Christoph Then of Testbiotech explains, "EFSA based its approval of SmartStax to a large extent on data derived from the parental plants. But this approach is highly complicated since SmartStax has many insecticidal toxins, thus more interactions can to be expected. These interactions remain unstudied." (June 28, 2011, CBAN press release: "Report Exposes Unstudied Risks of Monsanto's Genetically Modified "SmartStax" Corn: EU Member State Critiques and Leaked Industry Documents Uncover Safety Questions.")

While insect resistant crops are engineered using genes from the naturally occurring soil bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), the risks posed by Bt toxins cannot be assessed by comparing them with the Bt toxins that occur naturally. As the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health states, "concerning all Bt toxins, a history of safe use cannot be argued on the basis of the safety of Bt sprays applied in organic farming. The inserted genes are truncated and arranged with expression modulating DNA parts originating from different organisms and permanently expressed compared to a tight timely Bt spraying schedule."

Additionally, the Bt toxin Cry1A.105 in SmartStax was artificially synthesized and as stated by Austria, "There is no safe use of the new recombinant protein expressed by an artificially arranged insert such as Cry1A.105."

In their comments on the EFSA SmartStax decision, regulators from Austria summarized: "A stacked organism has to be regarded as a new event, even if no new modifications are introduced." This view is consistent with EU regulations and with United Nations Codex guidelines that Canada helped negotiate. Austrian experts take this view because "The gene-cassette combination is new and only minor conclusions could be drawn from the assessment of the parental lines, since unexpected effects (e.g. synergistic effects of the newly introduced proteins) cannot automatically be excluded."

### Industry "science"

Unlike Health Canada, the European Food Safety Authority looked at documents supplied by Monsanto and Dow AgroScience. These were largely summaries of tests commissioned by the companies. Like most science behind GM crop approvals, the science submitted by industry was not peer-reviewed. After gaining access to some of the industry documents Testbiotech stated, "The industry dossiers not only have major defects in study design, they also lack independent quality controls." The reliability of data from the only animal feeding study conducted (it looked at the question of nutrition) was questioned by EU Member States due to issues with the study design, validity of data and statistical analysis.

No animal feeding studies or other in-depth investigations were conducted on the potential health hazards of SmartStax to either humans or animals. Experts from EU Member States criticized the lack of any data on potential health effects. One issue raised was the fact at least one of the Bt proteins in SmartStax is known to show immune reactions. What this means for human consumption of the GM corn was not investigated. A number of countries repeated the recommendation for at least one rodent feeding study in order to examine immune responses.

### New approach, more studies needed

The recommendations from EU country experts detail the type of testing that is not being done, but which may be necessary. The basic critique is that no experiments with SmartStax itself were carried out. EU countries argued that, while the data from the parental lines can be informative, it is not sufficient for a risk assessment.

The Belgian Biosafety Advisory Council stated, "The safety aspects of the multiple challenge, due to the combination of the newly inserted proteins, are rather weakly demonstrated… It is highly desirable to refer to studies that have demonstrated that the combination of all these newly inserted proteins is not detrimental." Similarly, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health stated, "The possibility of synergistic effects of the transgenic proteins present in GM maize MON 89034 x 1507 x MON 88017 x 59122 should be addressed in an improved way." The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation in Germany "considers that further information is required before the risk assessment… can be finalized."

Before GM SmartStax corn is officially approved in Europe, the European Commission is investigating further. Meanwhile, Health Canada remains blind to any and all risk possibilities, deciding instead that risk assessment is unnecessary.

**Lucy Sharratt** is the coordinator for the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, www.cban.ca/corn

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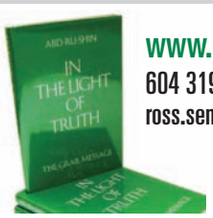


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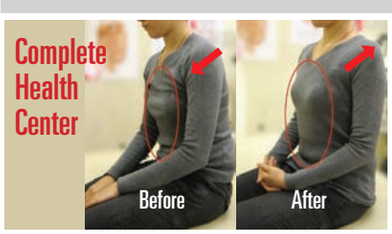


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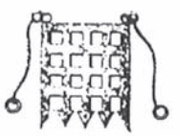

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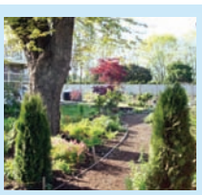

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# Letters

**We didn't ask for the HST**

Let's look at the HST referendum for what it was: a poll of the people, during which we were asked to choose between one tax and another.

In the late 1980s, the GST and PST were foisted upon the people, without our choice, by the co-operation of a few provincial governments instituting provincial sales tax and the federal Mulroney government instituting the Goods and Services Tax. No vote was taken. Very little debate was held. These were simply presented as economic measures, suggestions from the Ministers of Finance. A new tax ought to be collected by all businesses. Because it was slipped in without voter approval, it was not compulsory for every small business to collect it. Anyone making less than $30,000 dollars per annum did not have to sign up as a tax collector for the government. The government knew that most people wouldn't voluntarily do that. They did know that most large businesses would voluntarily do it. Here was the carrot: if large businesses would collect the GST and PST, it would mean that, instead of the government getting its money from the large businesses, the government would get its money from the average Joe.

Gradually these practices became institutionalized. People began to think, not only that they had to pay these taxes, but that they had to collect them too. They don't. Anyone making less than $30,000 dollars is still not obliged to collect it, though there are many within the tax department who will actually tell you that you do, who actually believe now that you must. A couple of years ago, the HST was foisted upon the people, without our choice, through the collusion of two provincial governments – Ontario and BC – and Harper's federal government. Again, there was no law passed, no vote taken, and very little debate held. These were simply presented by the Ministries of Finance as "smart economic moves."

We did not ask for the GST and PST. We did not ask for the HST. And we got polled to see if we wanted the HST or if we preferred to have GST and PST. The question was framed as "Which tax do you want?" It ought to have been framed as "Do you want either tax?"

*– Johnny Dixon, Vancouver*

**Water is not a commodity**

Open letter to the BC Ministry of Environment and Water Stewardship Division

I am writing as a concerned Albertan who is worried about the possibility of water being traded as a commodity in a free market. What happens in BC will have impacts here in Alberta, as we struggle with many of the same issues.

I've been watching the discussions of modernizing the current water act and I see a market system being touted as a solution that can solve the water problems of the province. I believe this may lead to the privatization of BC water. Essentially, if that happens, then water becomes available only to the highest bidders.

I want to propose another way to modernize the water act of the province. First, the resource needs to be taken out of a free market system because that economic system is not conducive to meeting the needs of humans who use and need water for life. Once the province's water is out of the free market system, a priority list of needs can be established that will ensure meeting the needs of people first. A BC water management system of this kind would need to protect the integrity of all the rivers and lakes in the province so a strong part of the new modernization act would necessarily include this protective component. Then water use would be directed by the priority list mentioned earlier. Following these steps would lead BC to establish a truly modern water act that could stand as an example to other provinces.

All of this requires committed political will to bring it to fruition. There are enormous repercussions with modernizing the water act. I'm wondering how the political will for all this can be cultivated in order for an exemplary water act to be established.

*– Sydney Henderson, Alberta*

**Dangerous levels of radiation in Canada from Fukushima**

Dangerous levels of radiation have been detected in multiple locations in Canada as governments and the corporate media continue to cover up the real dangers posed by the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The tests were taken in multiple places in Canada including Lake Louise, Kelowna, Red Deer, Edmonton and Hope. The radiation tests that were taken near Lake Louise clearly showed harmful radiation levels up to 1.66 mcSv/hr. So far, Canadian and American authorities have remained silent. We must demand action from local health authorities. If these levels of radiation are being picked up in Canada, it seems only a matter of time before they reach the west coast of the United States. This should be a Red Alert to all Americans and Canadians.

http://blog.alexanderhiggins.com/2011/07/19/dangerous-levels-radiation-recorded-multiple-canada-locations-fukushima-radiation-dangers-continue-36141

*– Alex Thomas*

# One less tiger

**Bruce Cox**

In early July, a Sumatran tiger, one of fewer than 400 left on Earth, died after being trapped in a steel snare. The tiger was found on an acacia plantation owned by Sinar Mas, a notorious rainforest destroyer. In 1930, there were three subspecies of unique, majestic tigers found in Indonesia. Today, two of them are extinct and the last one is in real trouble.

The Sumatran tiger is classified as "critically endangered" – on the brink of extinction and barely hanging on. They've lost 93 percent of their habitat because companies like Sinar Mas and its subsidiary Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) are destroying their forest homes. Tigers, like the one killed, have no choice but to roam out of their natural territory where they are easily slaughtered by poachers or trapped in snares by the people who move in.

To stop this, Greenpeace needs your help to expose the massacre, pressure corporations to cut ties with APP and fight on the ground to save these last remaining Sumatran tigers. (www.greenpeace.org) Greenpeace takes absolutely no money from corporations or governments. Without you, the tigers don't stand a chance. Without your action, APP will continue lining its pockets with profits, more tigers will be shot or snared as they lose their habitat and the last Sumatran tigers will just be collateral damage.

photo © lorboaz

With the financial help of supporters, Greenpeace has put the squeeze on APP through its customers, convincing major companies like Nestle, Kraft, Unilever, and now Lego, to stop buying products linked to rainforest destruction in Indonesia. By now, you've probably seen the latest campaign targeting Mattel for packaging its world-famous Barbie dolls with trees from the Sumatran tiger's last remaining habitat.

Greenpeace is ready to put the nail in APP's profit coffin by exposing their destructive operations and the companies that do business with them and to continue campaigning on the ground to protect Sumatran tigers. Please give the last Sumatran tigers a future – before it's too late.

**Bruce Cox** is the executive director of Greeenpeace Canada, www.greenpeace.org

**Independent Media** Steve Anderson

# The cost of spying online

It's time to re-imagine the role of both citizens and government. It's past time for governments to become more permeable and to encourage and empower citizens to govern themselves.

In many ways, the process to re-imagine citizenship and governance seems to be well underway. Citizens are newly empowered by online tools and governments seem to be evolving in order to facilitate deeper citizen participation. Sometimes, that process is expressed through willing governments opening their activities to the public, such as when the City of Vancouver adopted its openness motion. At other times, the catalyst for this change comes in the form of public pressure in reaction to a poorly thought-out government decision.

The latter appears to be at play concerning the Conservative Party's impending online spying legislation. I've written before about how the legislation, if passed, will allow a range of "authorities" to use the Internet to spy on Canadians, without a warrant. I've also explained the cost of this invasive online spying will be passed onto you.

The legislation is expensive, excessive and downright bizarre.

If we care about privacy, the open Internet and our basic democratic rights, it's time to show Public Safety Minister Vic Toews that ramming online spying down our throats has repercussions. Forcing ISPs to install and employ costly online surveillance infrastructure takes Canada in the wrong direction – a dangerous move during an already precarious time in our digital history.

This government wants to achieve "natural governing party" status. If it wants to earn that status, its members must show respect for Canadians. And when they don't, we need to speak up and let them know there are political consequences for their irresponsible actions.

Recognizing the power of engaged Canadians, the Conservatives, to their credit, did respond quickly on the issue of internet metering earlier this year; backed by the voices of nearly half-a-million Canadians and all major political parties, the Conservatives sent the CRTC back to the drawing board on key pricing rules for independent Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

That decision worked out very well for Conservatives – they temporarily shifted the blame for the dismal state of Canada's telecom market onto the CRTC, making it seem as if the CRTC is solely responsible for Canada's market being one of the worst of all industrialized countries. Many Canadians saw the Conservatives as heroes when they told the CRTC to reconsider its rules that would allow big telecom companies to impose Internet metering on nearly all Canadian Internet users.

If the Conservatives learned anything at all from that experience, they'll move swiftly to adapt their online spying legislation so it is in line with the will of Canadians. We'll have to wait and see, but the clock is definitely ticking. The Conservatives made an election promise to ram through their online spying (what they call "Lawful Access") legislation within the first 100 sitting days of Parliament.

This legislation is reckless and irresponsible. We need to make it clear that using our personal information without our permission is unacceptable and that our fundamental right to privacy is important to us. Any proposals to expand telecommunications surveillance must be based on a clear need for new powers, demonstrated through verifiable evidence.

We need to send a strong message: when our representatives take a swipe at our privacy and digital economy with no public consultation, there will be consequences. Canadians can speak out at http://stopspying.ca

**Steve Anderson** is the national coordinator for OpenMedia.ca He has written for **The Tyee, Toronto Star, Epoch Times** and **Adbusters**. steve@openmedia.ca, www.FacebookSteve.com, www.SteveOnTwitter.com

# Towards Eden a feat of natural and sustainable energies

**Adam Siddhartha Sealey**

On the weekend of July 22-24, at the foot of the mountain just outside of Boston Bar, BC, on the traditional lands of the Nahatlatch peoples, a group of about 250 people came together for Towards Eden, a music festival that was, according to festival visionaries and organizers Ash Bigdeli and Erin Sage Sharp, the first time a full-power modern music stage has been 100 percent powered by Earth energies – solar, wind and pedal power. It was a remarkable accomplishment and the genesis of how future music festivals and off-the-grid conscious communities can flourish without consuming grid energy or burning fossil fuels.

In the July issue of *Common Ground*, the cover story by Geoff Olson featured Bolivia and Ecuador's new Law of Mother Earth, an initiative that represents visionary thinking from the leaders of those two countries and heralds a critical leap in how we, as societies, place value on and respect our source of life and sustenance – our Mother Earth – and how we make collective decisions as to how we will meet our basic needs of food, shelter, warmth, love and community.

The Towards Eden festival was generously sponsored by *Common Ground* magazine and its visionary publisher Joseph Roberts who organized the Walk for Peace in 1982 and worked tirelessly to keep nuclear power out of our region, an act for which we are truly grateful, especially today.

The Festival brought together incredible local musicians and Djs who played music that supported the ideals of the festival, namely, finding a new way to live in harmony with nature where we honour our own needs and the needs of the Earth at the same time. Performers included Buckman Coe whose brand new album "By the Mountain's Feet" features the hit song *The Apocalypse Is Not Guaranteed*, challenging us to live in harmony with our lands and oceans.

"I wrote this song a month after the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill. I wanted to create a song of hope in the face of one of the worst environmental disasters we've ever seen. I do have very real fears for life on this planet but we can make a choice to reside in hope and live in inspired action," Buckman notes.

The festival saw hundreds of people come together to create a living template of sustainable community, artistic expression, fun and loving support. The main music stage was powered by a bank of 16 deep cycle batteries, constantly recharging through a combination of solar energy, small wind turbines and six bicycles man-powered by community members more than willing to pedal hard and long with a smile on their face.

Music system designer Ash Bigdeli, a passionate man whose first child was born this year, designed the system so that, rather than sucking more juice from the batteries when the need for bass increased, the bass would fall off such that we would all hear it and be compelled to jump on the bikes and transform our energy from the air, sunshine, love and great food into music, into soul-bouncing, deep bass that our friends could enjoy. It was the essence of true community and a real "village" was created.

The weekend also included dozens of workshops on such themes as bee keeping, permaculture, local plant identification and foraging, raw and vegan food classes, yoga, contact dancing, communicating with nature, drumming, massage, healing, medicinal body painting and many more.

Imagine if all future festivals were powered by solar, wind and pedal-power. I hope we can all continue to walk confidently Towards Eden, together. This is only the beginning. Look for the Towards Eden fundraiser coming soon to build on our success and grow this truly sustainable movement of community and music. www.towardseden.com

# Chevron sponsorship leaves bad aftertaste

We all like something for free, don't we? So what's not to like about Fresh Air Cinema, a free, outdoor series of movie screenings offered around the Lower Mainland this summer? This mobile cinema company has been setting up its giant, inflatable movie screens, sound systems and generators in parks and outdoor locations, showing Hollywood classics like *Jaws*, *E.T.*, *Pretty Woman*, *Stand by Me* and *Back to the Future*, films audiences don't tire of watching again, especially when you can bring the kids and a picnic and it's *en plein air*. The dusk screenings are free, thanks to some corporate partnership. And there's the rub. Chevron has been sponsoring the big Summer Cinema Series of screenings in a prime Stanley Park location at Ceperley Meadow/Second Beach.

The oil giant, whose logo is emblazoned on the online trailer and microsite on Fresh Air Cinema's web pages, must reckon that free movies with prize giveaways can buy goodwill. Maybe it will also divert eyes away from its involvement in the "Amazon Chernobyl" that was so excellently documented in Joe Berlinger's *Crude* (reviewed in *CG* in October 2009). Chevron is currently fighting tooth and nail against an $18-billion fine handed down by an Ecuador court in February for poisoning the Ecuadorian Amazon and its people. There are four copies of Berlinger's multi award-winning *Crude* at the Vancouver Central Library. And they're free too.

From **Higher Ground.** Left: Annika (Dagmara Dominczyk). Right: Corinne Walker (Vera Farmiga). Photo by Molly Hawkey, courtesy Sony Pictures Classics

*Higher Ground* (due out 26th) follows a born-again Christian woman from her childhood inculcation into religion to her later years where she begins to question her faith. The drama has earned impressive reviews, particularly for actor-director Vera Farmiga in the lead role and for the even-handed and respectful portrait of Christian fundamentalism. Farmiga's portrayal includes both critical and supportive views of faith and a particular brand of evangelicalism. Importantly, in an industry – well, at least in Hollywood – that doesn't really *do* faith, the film tries to take an in-depth look at the challenges faced by the believer, exploring the relationship between spirituality and feminism, sexual desire and cultural aspects of evangelical Christianity.

Miranda July (*Me and You and Everyone We Know*), another woman who wrote, directed and stars in her second film, *The Future,* is also concerned with finding the deeper essence of life, although perhaps in a more light-hearted manner. Her quirky drama follows a thirty-something LA couple comprised of dance instructor Sophie (July) and her boyfriend Jason (Hamish Linklater), an online support technician. The couple experiences a joint mid-life crisis after agreeing to take a cat from the pound until its injured paw heals. A month before their newfound responsibility is set to begin, the idiosyncratic hipster couple quit their jobs and resolve to use what they see as their precious last days of freedom to find something that gives their lives more meaning. That's a task that proves harder than expected and events take an unusual course.

July, who is also a performance artist, offers whimsical and surrealist touches as the film plays with aspects of the couple's existentialist angst: the cat narrates, a T-shirt crawls. The weirdness won't appeal to everyone, but her bittersweet romance has earned praise for its unique exploration of the themes of love, intimacy and relationships between both lovers and strangers. (opens Aug. 5th).

**Robert Alstead** made the Vancouver documentary **You Never Bike Alone** www.youneverbikealone.com He writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

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**AUG 11, 12-14, & 19**
**Experience the Power of Soul Healing** with Dr. & Master Zhi Gang Sha. Free Soul Healing evening Aug. 11. Introduction to Tao: Aug 12-14. Soul Healing Day Aug. 19. Info: 604-733-0853. Register www.Dr.Sha.com or call 888-339-6815.

**AUG 11 - SEP 8**
**Summer Herb Walk Series:** 5 Herb Walks - 5 Weeks - 5 Sites around Vancouver, 7-8:30PM, Thursdays, $100/series, 604-613-8384. www.UrbanHerbSchool.ca

**AUG 12**
**Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center** invites you to an evening of silence, meditation and wisdom with Sr. Rajni from Japan who will present "The Link of Love" to celebrate the Rakshabandan. 6:30PM – 9:00PM, 3467 Monmouth Ave., Vancouver. Admission free. 604-436-4795 or vancouver.info@ca.bkwsu.org

**AUG 18**
**"A Thousand Mountains"** – a dance performance choreographed by Simon Fraser University fine arts masters student Barbara Lindenberg. The Wise Hall, 8PM, 1882 Adanac St., Vancouver. By donation. Follow SFU on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube http://www.sfu.ca/about/follow.html

**AUG 18**
**Free Power Animal Drum Journey & information evening**. Shamanic Training Program begins fall 2011. Hosted by the Institute of Shamanic Medicine. 7:15pm, Vancouver. RSVP early; space is limited. Email: info@shamanicmedicine.ca www.shamanicmedicine.ca 1-877-329-8668.

**AUG 19-21**
**Regenerating the Ecological Self:** Exploring Nature as Healer, Teacher, and Catalyst for Change – An experiential, interactive course weaving the connections between natural ecosystems, wisdom cultures, western science, arts, philosophy, and personal and collective leadership. Stanley Park Ecology Centre, www.backtothegarden.ca

**AUG 9**
**Nagasaki – Hiroshima Remembered 66th Anniversary,** Victoria. Aug. 9, 1945 – the day the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki 7:30 pm. Craigflower Park / Kosapsom at Admirals Rd. and Gorge Rd. West Saanich. Atomic bombing remembered with origami cranes and lanterns. Lantern making starts at 7 pm, songs 7:30 pm, followed by floating the lanterns in the Gorge. Free event, lantern supplies provided. Sponsored by The Victoria Raging Grannies, Physicians for Global Survival, Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society, Victoria Peace Coalition, The Council of Canadians – Victoria.

### Fukushima tragedy demonstrates that nuclear energy doesn't make sense

An essential design principle for technology should be that we, the generations that benefit, should bear the major costs of its mistakes. Nuclear power fails this simple test miserably…Nor have we properly addressed the problem of nuclear waste, even though each year's operation of a reactor creates enough plutonium (if separated from the waste) to make about 30 nuclear bombs.
*– Arjun Makhijani*

**AUG 21**
**Barenaked Ladies**: part of Whistler's free outdoor Whistler Presents Concert Series. Showtime 7PM. More info 1-800whistler or visit www.whistler.com/presents

**AUG 26-28**
**Introduction to Foot Reflexology** commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30PM, $10; Course $395. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

**AUG 26-28**
**Women's Healing Retreat:** A journey of Self-discovery through the gentle wisdom of the horse. Fort Langley, $445. 604-807-2255 www.wisteriaacres.com.

**AUG 27**
**Tibet Festival** at Vandusen Gardens Floral Hall: Celebration of Tibetan culture and fundraiser, 11am-7pm. Info at www.tsengdokrinpoche.com/tibetfestival2011htm or 604-248-4930, ext. 2031.

**SEP 3-5**
**Bumbershoot 2011:** Seattle's music and arts festival at Seattle Center. $90/3-day pass or $35/single day ticket. Free admission for kids 10 and under. Tickets & info at www.bumbershoot.org

**SEPT 9-11**
**Introduction to Hand Reflexology** commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30PM, $10; Course $395. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

**SEPT 16-18**
**Finding Balance Through Rhythm** TaKeTiNa weekend workshop with Zorina Wolf (www.villageheartbeat.com). Musical, meditative, group process. No experience necessary. $185 before August 31st. Register: ronaloka@vnc.bc.ca

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**SEPT 23**
**Yuen Method free demo**, Best Western Chateau Granville, 1100 Granville St. See Crystaline Vision display ad this issue for class dates and locations. More info at www.crystalinevision.com
Email colette@crystalinevision.com
1-306-584-9135.

**SEP 23**
**2011 Dr. Rogers Prize** for excellence in complementary & alternative medicine. Fairmont Waterfront Hotel. Keynote speaker Wayne Jonas. Register for the evening Gala & the afternoon Colloquium at www.drrogersprize.org

**SEPT 29-OCT 2**
**American Monetary Institute Reform Conference**, University Center, downtown Chicago. Dedicated to the independent study of monetary history, theory and reform. Info/ registration at www.monetary.org or by phone 1-224-805-2200.

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**SOS (Science of Spirituality):** See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

**TUESDAYS**

**Reflexology Student Clinic** 6–10pm. One- hour sessions $20. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. www.pacificreflexology.com

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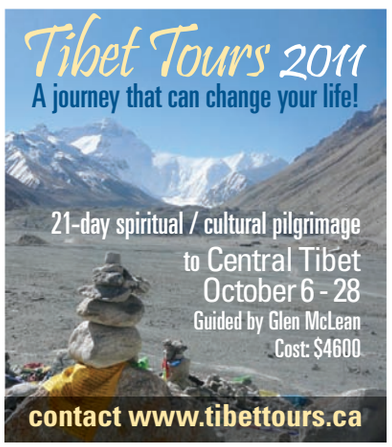


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...**Olson** *from pg. 11*

of mind and surroundings. In aboriginal cultures, ceremony and ritual provide context, ensuring a supportive context for psychic navigation of a strong medicine. In Brazil, ayahuasca is the sacrament of a legally recognized synchretic practice, Santo Daime. (In 2005, the US Supreme Court approved the ceremonial use of ayahuasca on US soil by an offshoot of the Santo Daime, the *União do Vegetal*.)

Given the wild west nature of some psychedelic tourism, the speakers were in agreement of a pressing need for agreed-upon standards of use of traditional medicinal plants in North America. Therapists, psychologists and health professionals working with these substances must offer full disclosure to clients and seek informed consent. (The agreement with clients of Iboga Therapy House, a privately funded healing retreat on BC's Sunshine Coast, runs to 32 pages, says program director Sandra Karpetas.)

Artists, musicians and writers have long known of the creative potential of certain non-addictive substances, as have many computer programmers and scientists. The Nobel Prize-wining biochemist Kary Mullis has claimed he came up with the idea for the "polymerase chain reaction," a scientifically revolutionary technique for copying fragments of DNA, while under the influence of LSD. Spiritual experiences are also not uncommon. And there is growing evidence that psychedelics are useful in addressing hard-to-treat disorders, particularly alcoholism and drug addiction. Yet these substances, many of them still illegal outside of medical research circles, can also precipitate psychopathology in users predisposed to psychosis – especially if they are used with no regard to set and setting, or dosage. The best analogy for psychedelics is the family car – it can be used as a tool to transport you safely from one place to another, or as a joy-riding, four-wheeled weapon.

Mate argues for the health benefits of ayahuasca and ibogaine, when they are used with caution and respect for their power. "All illness, from my perspective…all this represents a story, a narrative that a person constructs very early in life. And the way they live brings them into illness or into addiction," he observes. "What is at the core is the connection to everything. The sacred is about getting beyond the personality, getting the to point of authenticity beyond the conditioned self. That is what the spiritual traditions boil down, as far as I understand them."

Dennis McKenna believes the medical establishment's separation of health and spirituality is arbitrary and that they are two sides of the same existential coin. He points to a 2006 study by Roland Griffiths of John Hopkins University on psilocybin-induced mystical experiences. More than 60 percent of the subjects described effects that were indistinguishable from a "full mystical experience" as measured by established psychological parameters. One third said it was the single most spiritually significant experience of their life and more than two-thirds ranked it among their five most meaningful and spiritually significant experiences. According to Griffiths, the subjects compared it in importance to the birth of their first child or the death of a parent. "These were not druggies," Mckenna observes. "These were people who had never taken psychedelics. They had no particular interest in that, but they were interested in spirituality."

"Wouldn't you think Pfizer would be interested in a drug like that?" McKenna asked rhetorically. Perhaps not. The psychedelic experience is simply too mercurial for corporate legal departments to endorse as another lifestyle drug. It's all good fun grokking the invisible landscape, until the snakes arrive. If marketers want to see consumers blissed-out on some Huxleyan "soma," it probably won't be derived from dreamworld roto-rooters like psilocybin or ayahuasca.

McKenna adds that the spiritual dimension of psychedelics (or "entheogens" as they are commonly called in this context) is not mutually exclusive with a scientific view of the world. "It's misguided for anyone to try to become indigenous, unless they already are. We're not going to become Amazonian shamans; we can learn from their practices, and adapt them to our own post electronic twenty-first century environment. The important thing is that there is a context."

On the one side, you have the remarkable biochemical properties of certain plants. On the other side, you have the vast, uncharted territory of the human psyche. In between is the visionary realm conjured up by the overlap of these two worlds. Dr. Gabor Mate told of a conversation with a client with ALS, a terminal illness. "After his first ayahuasca trip, he said, 'I came here to save my life. I understand now that saving my life doesn't necessarily mean living longer; it means living while I'm alive.' That meant he got beyond the conditioned personality."

Mate has worked with people on the margins of society – the drinkers, the drug-addicted, the disturbed and discarded. Many of these people have constructed personal narratives with unhappy endings. With intention, there is always an opportunity to edit the text – and depending on the person, traditional plant medicine can aid the process, Mate observes."There is nothing more beautiful to see than someone who comes to realize how beautiful they are inside," the doctor adds.

By the time the conference wound down, I had a writing pad full of exclamation marks and underlined quotes. I was impressed by the speakers' combination of conviction and caution. I was moved by the words of Chenoa Egawa of the Native American Church, who spoke with great eloquence on how her people's medicine gave her a voice. One of the common reports from entheogenic experiences involves a momentary sense of deep connection to the living world. This experience may persist in memory as a profound truth. This is the ultimate irony: that ingesting plants and fungi sometimes facilitates an attitude of respect and reverence for the biosphere, the matrix of botanical life. We'd do well to remember that, in terms of plant-human co-evolution, the hairless primate is the junior partner. And the story is far from over.

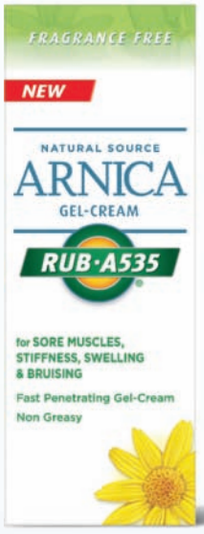
Plants are boring? Not on your life.

www.geoffolson.com

AUGUST 21ST, 2011
10am-5pm at Jericho Beach
1300 Discovery St, Vancouver BC
START
Jericho Beach Park
Discovery St.
W.1st Ave
NW Marine Dr.
W. 4th Ave
W. 4th Ave
Point Grey
No roads connecting
W.10th & W.4th
Alma St.
W. 10th Ave
Registration starts at 9:30 am. Take W.4th Avenue west and follow the turnoff for Spanish Bank/Locarno Beach. Continue north and follow our signs to the white Jericho Sailing Club building.
VOKRA saves over 1,300 cats a year from homelessness and death. We are a no-kill, 100% volunteer rescue, registered charity 86023 4467 RR0001.
MODERN MINT
event coordinators inc.

# You encourage a natural, healthy lifestyle.

## Now trust Rub A535 to put a naturally sourced active ingredient on your aching muscles.




**For Bruising and Swelling.**

Canadian Living
2011
BEST NEW PRODUCT
Voted by Consumers
– Research by BrandSpark –

**Winner Topical Pain Relief.**

For over 500 years, Arnica has been recognized as an effective treatment for bruising and swelling. And now the benefits of this ancient ingredient are brought to you by a trusted name. New Rub A535 Arnica is a fast-penetrating gel-cream that uses the anti-inflammatory properties of naturally sourced Arnica to relieve bruising and swelling as well as muscle soreness and stiffness. It's non-greasy, with a cool silky texture and pleasant light fresh scent. And there's no petrolatum, parabens or artificial fragrance or colour. Whenever you and your family experience bruising and swelling, apply new Rub A535 Arnica right away for quick, soothing relief. Trust Rub A535 Arnica, and enjoy the freedom to keep moving.

RUB·A535®

*The Freedom to Keep Moving*

# Live Pain Free

- Back Pain
- Hip Pain
- Knee Pain
- Neck Pain
- Muscle Pain
- Joint Stiffness
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# Feeling Sick? Tired?

- Anti-viral
- Anti-fungal
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- Increase Energy
- Serious Immune Conditions

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